

As a result, the National Park Service has been reconsidering the appropriate size for the park's elk population and ways to address the problem of chronic wasting disease, CWD, a fatal brain disease known to affect deer and elk, which has been detected in elk within the park. Research begun in 1994 was aimed at gathering critical information needed to provide a scientific basis for a new management plan.

I have been following this matter with interest, and last year I wrote the National Park Service about the four alternatives discussed in their draft environmental impact statement, DEIS, on the subject.

As I said in that letter, while I am not a wildlife biologist, my own observations and discussions of the matter with both nearby residents and people with some professional expertise led me to conclude that the document correctly identified adverse consequences for aspen trees and other vegetation that would result from continued high elk densities in the park. Accordingly, as my letter said, I support action to reduce the numbers of elk in the park to something like the numbers that would be expected under natural conditions.

One option discussed in the DEIS would be release of a limited number of gray wolves, in order to return a natural predator that could control elk numbers. However, the DEIS notes that this would involve "numerous uncertainties," including "whether park managers could effectively control wolf behavior and movements and keep wolves in the park," which I think is a source of valid concern for ranchers who operate on nearby lands and for other park neighbors. And, in any case, the DEIS indicates that it would still be necessary for there to be "lethal reduction"—meaning shooting of elk—at least for some time because the small number of wolves would not be enough to accomplish the desired reduction in the number of elk in the park.

So, as I noted in my letter, I readily understand why this has not been identified as the preferred alternative.

Instead, the DEIS said it would be preferable to have people cull the elk herd by "lethal reduction"—meaning the shooting of selected animals to reduce the overall numbers to a more appropriate level.

The DEIS identified two "lethal reduction" scenarios, differing mainly in the number of elk to be shot: 100 to 200 annually over 20 years or 200 to 700 elk annually for four years and after that 25 to 150 elk annually for 15 years. The DEIS says "adaptive use of wolves" could eventually become part of the second scenario, and it identified it as the preferred alternative.

I think the DEIS did a good job of providing reasons for that choice. However, as I said in my letter, I think serious consideration should be given to some changes in its implementation—particularly by exploring ways to increase participation by Colorado sportsmen and sportswomen.

There are several reasons I think this should be explored, especially the potential for significant savings to the taxpayers.

The DEIS estimates that implementing the preferred alternative would cost between about \$16.55 million and \$18.26 million over the next 20 years, with "labor" accounting for between \$6.55 million and \$7.37 million of those totals. Evidently, these "labor" costs would be mostly for compensating the people

doing the shooting, between 3 and 10 FTEs, with a smaller amount for administration (1.5 FTEs).

As I indicated in my letter, I think the National Park Service should explore the possibility that those costs could be substantially reduced by offering qualified Coloradans an opportunity to take part—under the strict guidance and direction of the National Park Service—either without compensation or for less compensation than the amounts on which the DEIS estimates were based.

Having reviewed my letter and other public comments on the DEIS, the National Park Service is now moving toward a decision on how to go about reducing the number of elk in Rocky Mountain National Park. That is what they should be doing.

But I am concerned that some of their statements in a recent meeting with Colorado wildlife officials suggest they have mistakenly concluded that they do not have the legal authority to act along the lines I suggested. My bill is intended to make it clear that they do have that authority.

At the meeting, the National Park Service distributed a paper entitled "Legal Analysis of Hunting within Rocky Mountain National Park." I am not a lawyer, and I do not dispute the accuracy of that paper. But I do dispute its relevance—because what is involved here is not "hunting," as that term is generally used, but instead a plan to reduce elk numbers by having people selected by the National Park Service and acting in accordance with its instructions shoot specified numbers of animals over specified periods of time.

So, the question is not whether the National Park Service plans to have elk shot—it does. The question is whether the National Park Service has the authority to consider allowing qualified Coloradans—specifically, those who have hunting licenses and who meet whatever qualifications the National Park Service may set—do the shooting.

My bill would resolve that question by making it clear that the laws applicable to Rocky Mountain National Park do not prevent the National Park Service from doing that.

It also would require the National Park Service to consult with the Colorado Division of Wildlife regarding the possible participation of that state agency in implementing the new plan for managing elk in the park. I have included that provision because, while management of the park is and should remain the sole responsibility of the National Park Service, I think the Service should at least discuss the matter to see whether the Division of Wildlife can be helpful in addressing this matter of concern to both agencies and the public.

I think my bill can help the National Park Service to move forward to resolve a real management problem in a cost-effective manner.

For the benefit of our colleagues, here is an outline of the legislation:

Section 1 provides definitions of terms used in the bill

Section 2 states that nothing in the laws applicable to management of Rocky Mountain National Park is to be construed as prohibiting the Interior Department from using the services of qualified individuals, as volunteers or under contract, from assisting in implementation of the new elk and vegetation management plan by using lethal means to reduce the park's elk population. The term "qualified indi-

viduals" means people with Colorado resident big-game hunting licenses who have whatever other qualifications the National Park Service may set after consulting with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. This section would not require the National Park Service to use the services of qualified Coloradans, but it would make clear that there is no legal obstacle to their doing so.

Section 3 would require the National Park Service to consult with the Colorado Division of Wildlife regarding that state agency's possible participation in implementing the new plan to manage elk in the park. This would not require such participation, but it would require the National Park Service to consider it.

Section 4 states that nothing in the bill is to be construed as applying to the taking of wildlife within the park for any purpose other than implementation of the new elk management plan.

IN RECOGNITION OF SISTER BARBARA SUESSMAN

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 16, 2007

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to recognize the life and work of a tremendous role model, advocate, and longtime resident of Brooklyn, Sister Barbara Suessman.

Born on February 26, 1937 in Brooklyn, Barbara attended St. Agnes High School in Rockville Center before joining the "Dominican Sisters" in 1956. It was through her involvement with the Dominican Sisters that led Sister Barbara to hear her calling and two years later, she pronounced her religious vows and embarked on a life dedicated to serving the underprivileged.

Sister Barbara held a strong belief that through active involvement with New York City's youth she would be most effective in serving the community. It was this conviction that led her to commit her life to working with various community organizations, schools, and ministries.

She spent the next twelve years teaching in several schools in Brooklyn and Queens. While she valued her years teaching the community's children, Sister Barbara wanted to take on more of an active role training peers how to mentor each other. In 1970, she accepted the position of supervisor at the Brooklyn Diocese sponsored "New School," offering special leadership training. After four years, she left to take over as Program director of the Brooklyn group home, Martin de Porres, where she remained until 1979.

Sister Barbara's dedication to the community's youth was undying—she always sought out additional ways to serve. She was instrumental in founding "Project Bridge," a program under the auspices of Christian Charities aimed at addressing the teen pregnancy problem in New York City. Over time, this modest program grew into a full-service organization with numerous locations around the city, providing services to teenage boys, as well as girls, who are pregnant, parenting, or at-risk of becoming parents.

In 1995, Sister Barbara began yet another endeavor, taking the position of Director of Finance with her Dominican Congregation, and